

*JOINT CITY/COUNTY COMMISSION
ON ELDERLY AFFAIRS*

*REPORT TO
SAN ANTONIO CITY COUNCIL
&
BEXAR COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS COURT*

May 16, 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

JOINT CITY/COUNTY COMMISSION.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
PART I.....	5
PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	5
PART II.....	11
SENIOR ISSUES SURVEY SUMMARY	11
SURVEY COMMENTS.....	23
SERVICES AND NEEDS SURVEY	24

JOINT CITY/COUNTY COMMISSION ON ELDERLY AFFAIRS

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City of San Antonio, Department of Community Initiatives, Elderly and Disabled Services Division
City of San Antonio, Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of the Director
Bexar County, Department of Housing and Human Services
Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG)/Bexar Area Agency on Aging
Texas Silver-Haired Legislature
Christian Senior Services
Catholic Charities

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Lou Hamilton Center
St. Margaret Mary Senior Nutrition Center
Frank Garrett Multi-Service Center
St. Vincent de Paul Senior Nutrition Center
St. Matthew Senior Nutrition Center
Greater Randolph Area Services Program (GRASP) Community Center
St. James Senior Nutrition Center

Executive Summary

U.S. Census Bureau data indicate that the 60-plus population is growing more rapidly than any other population group. In 2002, the City of San Antonio City Council and Bexar County Commissioners Court created the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs to advise those respective governmental bodies on issues, which impact the senior population. Subsequent to the swearing in of Commission members, the Commission set out to determine the most prominent issues of concern to seniors within the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. Once these concerns were identified and analyzed, the Commission sought to make appropriate public policy recommendations to the City of San Antonio City Council and Bexar County Commissioners Court predicated on empirical data and the concerns identified through community-wide, information gathering sessions. This report is a compilation of those efforts and establishes the Commission's vision for future public policy consideration by the City of San Antonio City Council and Bexar County Commissioners Court relating to the elderly, aged 60 and older.

This report is comprised of two major parts. Part I consists of public policy recommendations presented by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs concerning a number of issues pertinent to area seniors, and which the Commission feels would adequately address the needs of a senior population projected to exceed 411,000 by the year 2040. These recommendations reflect the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs' vision for future public policy agendas by the City of San Antonio City Council and Bexar County Commissioners Court relating to the prioritization, funding, programming and services to the City of San Antonio and Bexar County 60-plus elderly population.

Part II outlines the Commission's efforts in obtaining the empirical data regarding senior issues essential in supporting the aforementioned public policy recommendations. Part II consists of a senior issues survey summary, individualized charts detailing survey summary data, survey comments obtained in the survey instruments at information gathering sessions sponsored by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs and other sources, and lastly English and Spanish versions of the survey instrument itself.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that Texas' 60-plus population growth continues to parallel national trends and projects it will dramatically increase 193% by the year 2040. Bexar County's 60-plus population is projected to increase by 116% during the same period. The 60-plus population has unique needs, which require specialized programming and services allowing seniors to maintain their independence and quality of life, therefore, making it imperative that senior issues to be a focal point of future public policy debate and development. This report, in part, provides public policy decision-makers a glimpse at the essential needs of the 60-plus population within the City of San Antonio and Bexar County as they currently exist.

PART I

PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO SENIOR ISSUES

GENERAL:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes the City of San Antonio and Bexar County should take a more collaborative role in coordinating existing senior services, identifying senior needs, and implementing programming and services. The City and County should also collaboratively increase awareness of available senior programming and services.

Public Policy Recommendation

- The Commission encourages the creation of a City/County Office on Elderly Affairs to adequately address the future needs of the elderly population throughout Bexar County. The Office on Elderly Affairs would be a highly visible, Department-level entity and focal point in the implementation of elderly programming and services throughout Bexar County in coordination with the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG)/Bexar Area Agency on Aging and its Area Plan.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes all Medicare-eligible seniors should have access to low-cost prescription drug coverage. The National Council on Aging reported that in 1996, only 53% of Medicare beneficiaries had prescription drug coverage, generally received through former employers, Medicare Supplemental Insurance policies, or Medicaid; however, this does not adequately protect seniors from high out-of-pocket expenses. The Council also reported that about 25% of Medicare beneficiaries spent over \$500 out-of-pocket on prescriptions in 1999. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 85.1% of survey respondents indicated prescription drug coverage was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendation

- The Commission urges extending City/County negotiated prescription drug benefits to all Medicare-eligible seniors in Bexar County. Increasing the pool of potential beneficiaries could dramatically decrease the cost of prescription drug benefits to City and County employees. Medicare-eligible seniors would be required to pay vendors for their prescription drugs.

NUTRITION:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes increased access to congregate and home delivered meals services for the elderly are needed in the community. The Administration on Aging (AOA) reports that an evaluation of Elderly Nutrition Programs released in FY 1996 found that program participants have higher daily intakes of key nutrients than similar non-participants and that they have more social contacts as a result of the program. The AOA also reported that among program participants, 80%-90% have incomes below 200% of the Department of Health and Human Services' poverty level index, which is twice the rate for the overall elderly population. In addition, more than twice as many nutrition program participants live alone; and two-thirds of program participants are either over or under their desired weight, placing them at risk for nutrition and health problems. Home-delivered meal participants have twice as many physical impairments compared with the overall elderly population. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 80.2% of survey respondents indicated nutrition was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges increased budgetary prioritization and funding to expand congregate and home delivered meals for seniors throughout Bexar County.
- The Commission urges additional funding from community partners in the private sector through grants or sponsorship.
- The Commission encourages increased program income through fund-raising and other activities.
- The Commission urges continued and expanded partnerships with the San Antonio Food Bank.
- The Commission urges the establishment of additional senior congregate meal sites within the City of San Antonio and Bexar County, such as faith-based organizations.
- The Commission urges exploring senior nutritional partnerships with local school districts.

MEDICARE/MEDICAID:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes that, although these are Federal and State programs, the City and County have an inherent responsibility to their respective constituents in advocating for the financial integrity and continued viability of these programs. Medicare covers many hospital costs for acute care; however, beneficiaries incur significant out-of-pocket expenses, which show no signs of abating. In addition, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) reports that chronic illness is America's highest cost and fastest growing healthcare issue, and that approximately 69% of seniors who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid have more than one chronic condition. NCOA also reports that nearly 70% of the nation's personal healthcare expenditures are for chronic care. Medicare, which was designed to meet the needs of acute episodes of illness, does a particularly poor job addressing the needs of seniors with chronic illness. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 76.1% of survey respondents indicated Medicare/Medicaid was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission encourages senior-specific programming components be incorporated in local programs, such as healthcare, fitness and wellness.
- The Commission urges increased awareness efforts to educate seniors of available benefits, such as Medicare waivers.
- The Commission urges increased funding for Medicare waivers.

TRANSPORTATION:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes that urban transit services, such as those provided by VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority, do not adequately address the needs of a mobility-impaired senior population. Additional specialized door-to-door paratransit services are needed to enhance the independence and quality of life of seniors. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 74.6% of survey respondents indicated transportation issues were a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges the City and County more aggressively advocate within the VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for increased senior access to transportation services.
- The Commission urges the local medical community to re-invest in elderly transportation for essential medical appointments.

- The Commission urges the appointment of a mobility manager to assist in the coordination of transportation for the elderly within the City of San Antonio and Bexar County.
- The Commission encourages increased dissemination of community transportation resource information for area seniors.

SENIOR ONE-STOP ACCESS:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes the City and County should more proactively collaborate with the established Area Information Center's 2-1-1 system administered by the United Way and the established Aging Information and Referral Hotline administered by the Bexar Area Agency on Aging to ensure all information on available programs and services is exact and accessible to seniors. The City and County can also provide invaluable leadership in the development of the 2-1-1 system to ensure ease of accessibility and timely information. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 67.7% of survey respondents indicated senior one-stop access to information and services was a priority.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges the City and County to consider the feasibility of establishing Senior One Stop Access Centers in each of Bexar County's four quadrants.
- The Commission urges increased collaboration between the City, County, United Way and Bexar Area Agency on Aging to ensure the development of a streamlined, information access system for seniors.

HOUSING:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes there should be adequate temperature-controlled housing for seniors, which is elder friendly with modifications, such as accessible bathrooms. Assisted living facilities should have adequate oversight to ensure resident safety and comfort. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 61.9% of survey respondents indicated housing was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission encourages the City and County to work more collaboratively with the Texas Department of Human Services, Long Term Care Regulatory, to provide adequate oversight of licensed and certified assisted living facilities and to identify unlicensed facilities, which may pose a risk to the elderly.
- The Commission urges increased awareness of grants, maintenance programs and assisted living programs for seniors.
- The Commission urges increased affordable housing for area seniors.
- The Commission urges increased funding for independent living services.
- The Commission urges the City and County to ensure that all new and pre-existing senior housing units have central heating and air conditioning systems.

CRIME & SAFETY:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes crimes against the elderly have increased; therefore, creating a need for increased awareness and protection of seniors and their property. Increased emphasis should be placed on the protection of seniors and their property. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 65.8% of survey respondents indicated their safety was a concern; 63.6% of respondents indicated crime was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges increased penalties for crimes against the elderly.
- The Commission urges the City and County to collaborate with cell phone companies to provide emergency cell phone access for seniors.
- The Commission urges the placement of adequate signage adjacent to senior communities to slow vehicular traffic in pedestrian crossing areas.
- The Commission encourages local law enforcement agencies to identify and report incidents of crimes perpetrated against the elderly in order to assist in prevention efforts.
- The Commission urges increased funding and resources for programming, which provides vital information to seniors on how to protect themselves and their property.

TAX RELIEF:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes that seniors, many who increasingly rely on fixed incomes, need continued tax relief and should be able to easily obtain information regarding tax exemptions to which they are entitled. Current tax exemptions for seniors could be promoted and publicized more effectively. In addition, currently, the City of San Antonio has a \$65,000 exemption for citizens over 65; however, Bexar County does not. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 62.8% of survey respondents indicated tax relief was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges the Bexar County Commissioners Court to approve a tax exemption for seniors comparable to that provided by the City of San Antonio.
- The Commission urges an increase in the promotion and publicizing of tax relief options available to area seniors, such as working off school taxes.
- The Commission urges the City and County to exempt citizens, aged 65 and over, from special taxing zones, such as the Downtown Improvement Zone.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE:

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs believes that affordable, accessible legal services are needed for a growing elderly population. Effective, low-cost legal representation is important to ensure seniors receive services to which they are legally entitled. Elder abuse, including fraud and scams, as often reported in the media, require sustained legal services to enable elders to achieve optimum security and protection. In the survey on senior issues conducted by the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs, 63.1% of survey respondents indicated legal assistance was a concern.

Public Policy Recommendations

- The Commission urges the City and County to collaborate more effectively with the Bexar Area Agency on Aging to improve access to legal assistance services in the area.
- The Commission urges an increase in the promotion and marketing of “pro bono” and other available low-cost legal assistance services.

PART II

SENIOR ISSUES SURVEY SUMMARY

In 2002, the City of San Antonio and Bexar County created the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs to advise those governmental bodies on issues, which impact the senior population. In order to obtain feedback from seniors and information from others in the local community relating to issues of importance to seniors, the Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs held a series of information gathering sessions throughout the City and Bexar County. In addition, the Commission elected to survey seniors who did not wish to make public statements at the information gathering sessions, or may have been unable to attend an information gathering session. Surveys were also distributed throughout the local community by volunteers from the City's Department of Community Initiatives, Youth Opportunities (YO!) Program. YO volunteers targeted venues with high concentrations of seniors, such as shopping malls, bingo halls, and assisted living facilities. Surveys were also distributed to various senior groups by Bexar County's Department of Housing and Human Services, the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) and Commission members.

The survey instrument, created by a subcommittee of the Commission, contained 12 individual issues, which historically are of concern to seniors. An additional category of "Other" was included to provide additional opportunities for survey participants to list issues not incorporated into the instrument and/or to make comments. Of the 13 category items on the survey instrument, seniors completing the survey instrument were instructed to prioritize their top "5" issues in a 1-5 format with a "1" being the highest priority and a "5" being the lowest priority. However, it became apparent from the initial surveys collected that survey respondents were not prioritizing the issues as instructed on the surveys. Collected surveys indicated respondents were completing the surveys in numerous ways from using a variety of numbers to using "X's" or check marks, with most not prioritizing their responses. In order to increase the validity of the survey and garner some basic empirical data, all participant responses were equally considered and counted, regardless of marking and/or prioritization. In short, if a participant marked a category, it was counted. Survey responses were analyzed per category as aggregates and reported as a percentage of total respondents. For example, if 8 of 10 survey respondents marked the nutrition category on the survey instrument, it is reported in the summary as 80% of respondents indicating nutrition is a concern.

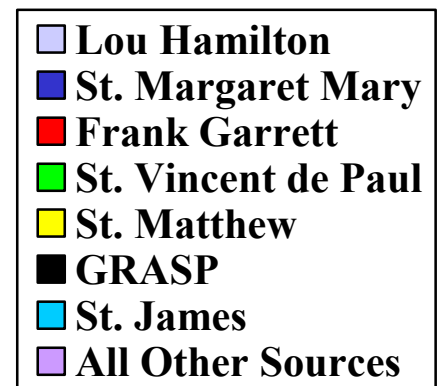
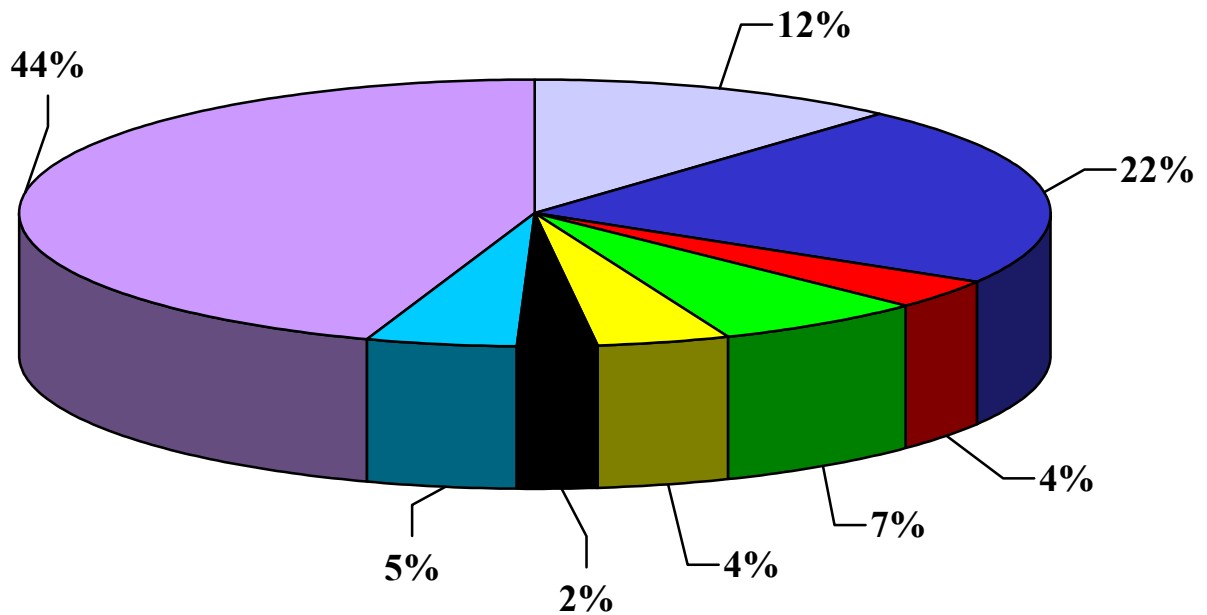
A total of 678 completed survey instruments were collected and analyzed. Surveys were analyzed in two ways. First, surveys were analyzed based on a distribution variable. Surveys collected at each individual information gathering session were analyzed separately. In addition, surveys collected from all sources other than information gathering sessions were also analyzed. Second, all 678 surveys were analyzed as an aggregate. Regardless of the type of analysis, surveys indicated that respondents seemed to consider all the senior issue categories on the survey, excluding the "other" category,

as of significant concern. In the aggregate analysis, 60% or more of all survey respondents indicated that each issue, excluding “other”, was a concern. In the individual distribution analysis, the percentage of respondents indicating each issue was a concern varied; however, the majority exceeded 50%. In only three of seven individual analyses did a percentage of respondents indicating an issue category was a concern drop below 50%. In those cases, the percentage of respondents who indicated it was a concern did not fall below 40%.

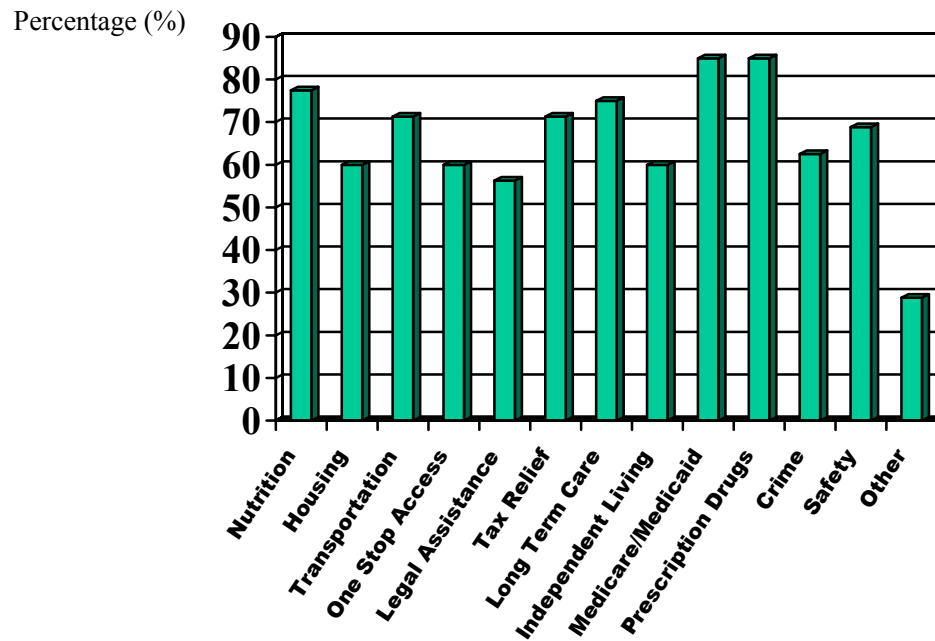
In the aggregate analysis, the issue of prescription drugs appeared to be the issue of concern to most survey respondents. Of the 678 survey respondents, 577 (85.1%) indicated that the issue of prescription drugs was a concern, compared to 544 (80.2%) who indicated nutrition was an issue of concern. Five hundred sixteen (516) respondents or 76.1% indicated Medicare/Medicaid was a concern, whereas 506 survey respondents (74.6%) indicated transportation was an issue of concern. Of the remaining issues, 472 survey respondents (69.6%) indicated long term care was an issue of concern; 459 (67.7%) reported One Stop Access to Information and Services was an issue of concern; 446 (65.8%) indicated safety was an issue of concern; 438 (64.6%) related independent living was an issue of concern; 431 (63.6%) indicated crime was an issue of concern; 428 (63.1%) related that legal assistance was an issue of concern; 426 (62.8%) indicated tax relief was an issue of concern; and 420 out of 678 respondents (61.9%) indicated housing was an issue of concern. Of the 678 survey respondents, 142 (20.9%) indicated that other issues were of concern. A listing of other concerns and issues annotated on surveys or voiced at information gathering sessions is enclosed at the end of this summary.

Although the use of the survey instrument did not work as initially planned, survey results do provide some useful information regarding issues of concern to seniors in the local community. First, survey results appear to validate that the issue categories on the survey instrument are, indeed, significant to seniors in the local community. Second, while not a prioritization of issues, the survey results give some indication of which of the issues are considered more significant than others to seniors, especially in the analyses of individual information gathering session surveys. Lastly, survey results seem to indicate that all the issues presented on the survey are of significant concern to seniors in the local community, thus posing a momentous challenge to the Commission in developing constructive and viable recommendations in dealing with these issues.

SENIOR SURVEY DISTRIBUTION
N=678



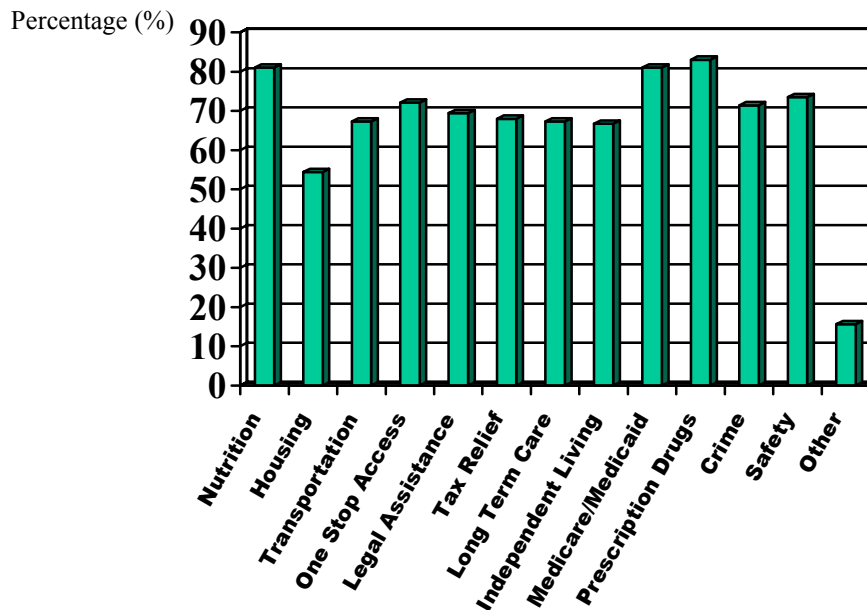
SESSION # 1
LOU HAMILTON CENTER
N=80



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT LOU HAMILTON CENTER

1. Medicaid/Medicare – 85.0%
2. Prescription Drugs – 85.0%
3. Nutrition – 77.5%
4. Long Term Care – 75.0%
5. Tax Relief – 71.3%
5. Transportation – 71.3%

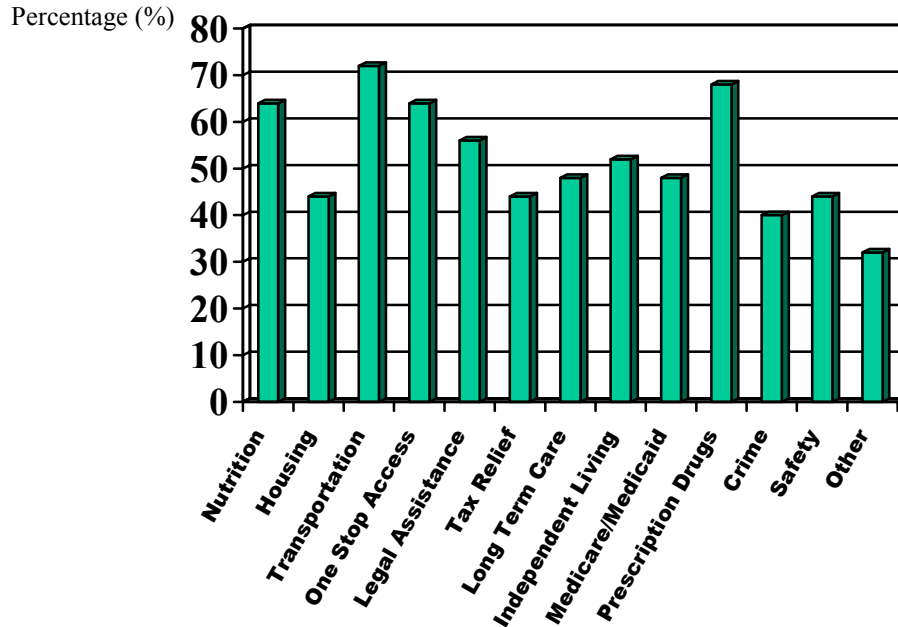
SESSION #2
ST. MARGARET MARY SENIOR NUTRITION
CENTER
N=147



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT ST. MARGARET MARY
SESSION

1. Prescription Drugs – 83.0%
2. Nutrition – 81.0%
3. Medicaid/Medicare – 81.0%
4. Safety – 73.5%
5. One Stop Access to Info and Services – 72.1%

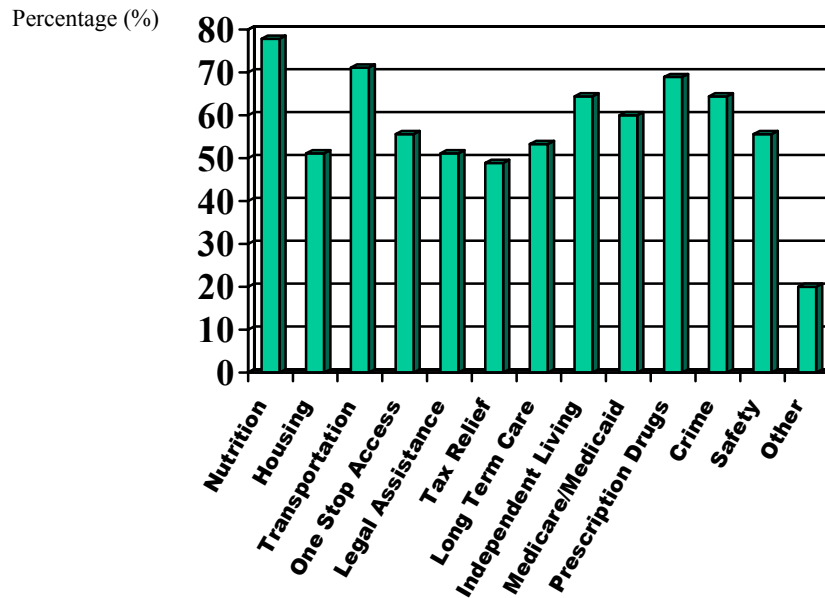
SESSION #3
FRANK GARRETT MULTI-SERVICE CENTER
N=25



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT FRANK GARRETT SESSION

1. Transportation – 72.0%
2. Prescription Drugs – 68.0%
3. Nutrition – 64.0%
4. One Stop Access to Services – 64.0%
5. Legal Assistance – 56.0%

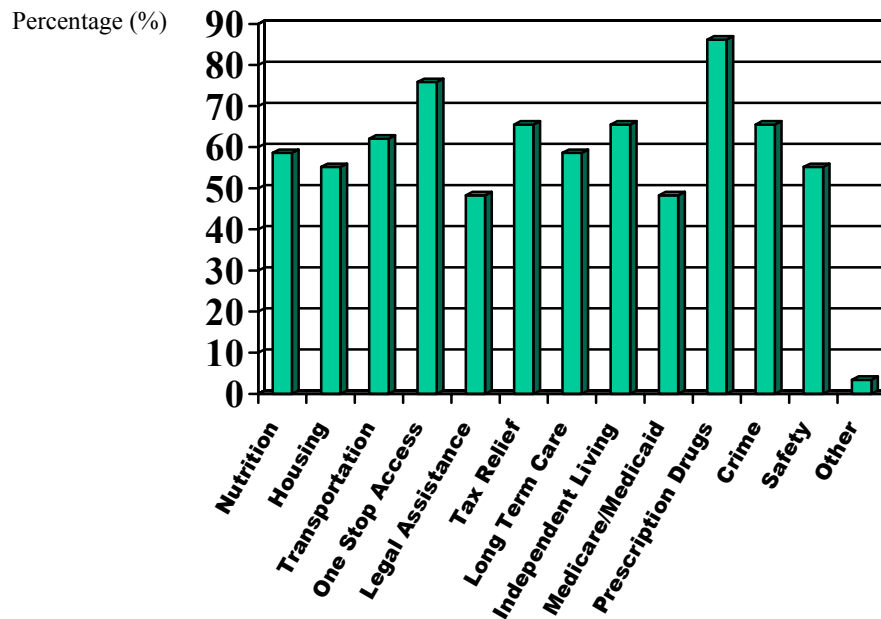
SESSION #4
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SENIOR NUTRITION
CENTER
N=45



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
SESSION

1. Nutrition – 77.8%
2. Transportation – 71.1%
3. Prescription Drugs – 68.9%
4. Independent Living – 64.4%
5. Crime – 64.4%

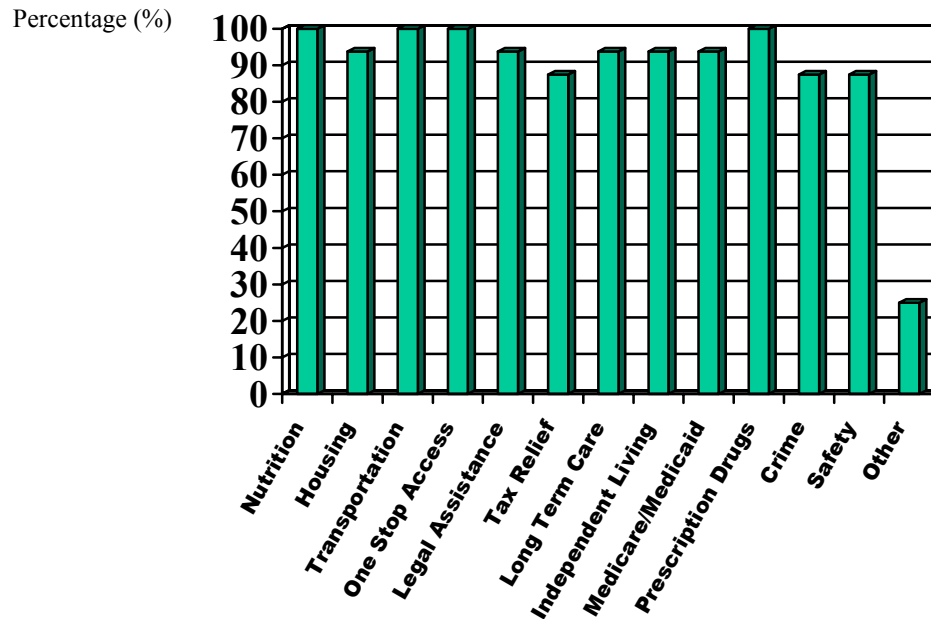
SESSION #5
ST. MATTHEW SENIOR NUTRITION CENTER
N=29



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT ST. MATTHEW SESSION

1. Prescription Drugs – 86.2%
2. One Stop Access to Info and Services – 75.9%
3. Tax Relief – 65.5%
4. Independent Living – 65.5%
5. Crime – 65.5%

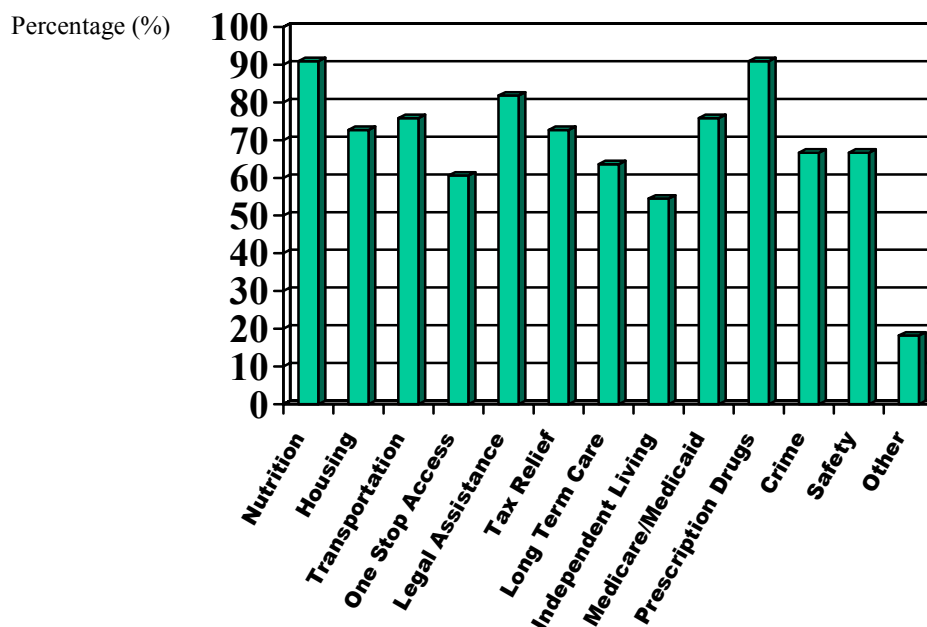
SESSION #6
Greater Randolph Area Services Program (GRASP)
Community Center, Converse
N=16



TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT GRASP SESSION

1. Nutrition – 100%
2. One Stop Access to Info and Services – 100%
3. Transportation –100%
4. Prescription Drugs – 100%
5. Five at 93.8%

SESSION #7
ST. JAMES SENIOR NUTRITION CENTER
N=33

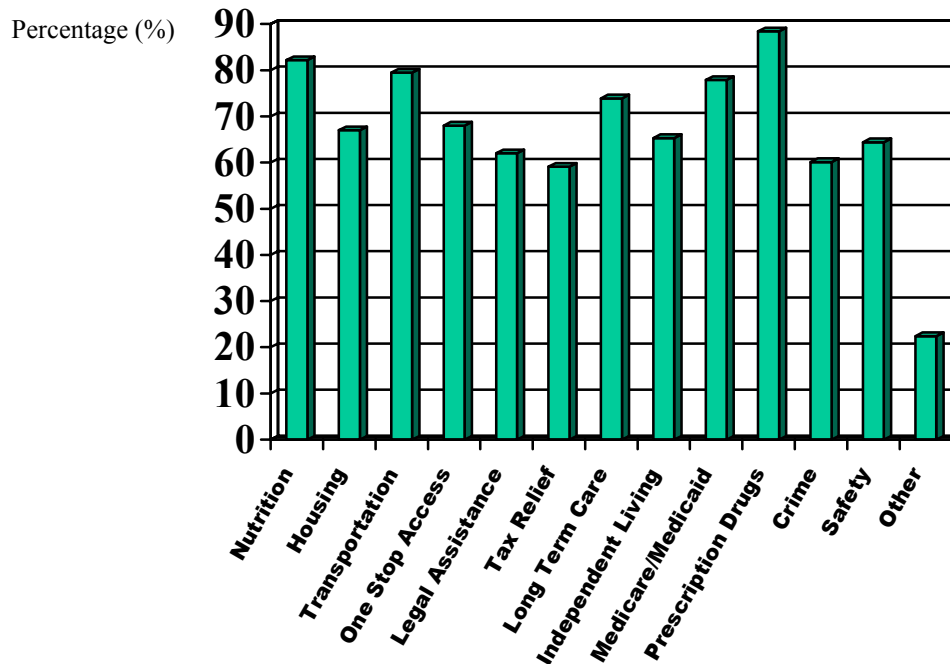


TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES AT ST. JAMES SESSION

1. Nutrition – 90.9%
2. Prescription Drugs – 90.9%
3. Legal Assistance – 81.8%
4. Transportation – 75.8%
5. Medicaid/Medicare – 75.8%

SURVEYS FROM ALL OTHER SOURCES

N=303

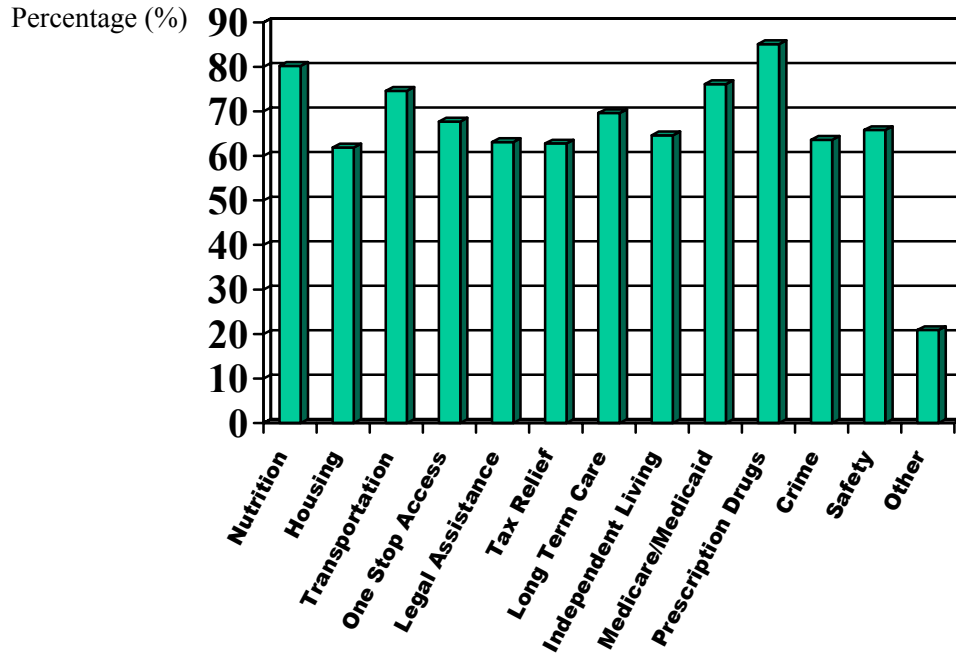


TOP 5 SENIOR ISSUES FROM ALL OTHER SURVEYS

1. Prescription Drugs – 88.4%
2. Nutrition – 82.2%
3. Transportation – 79.5%
4. Medicaid/Medicare – 77.9%
5. Long Term Care – 73.9%

COMBINED SURVEY SUMMARY

N=678



SENIOR ISSUES FROM COMBINED SURVEYS

1. Prescription Drugs – 85.1%
2. Nutrition – 80.2%
3. Medicare/Medicaid – 76.1%
4. Transportation – 74.6%
5. Long Term Care – 69.6%
6. One Stop Access to Info and Services – 67.7%
7. Safety – 65.8%
8. Independent Living – 64.6%
9. Crime – 63.6%
10. Legal Assistance – 63.1%
11. Tax Relief – 62.8%
12. Housing – 61.9%
13. Other – 20.9%

SURVEY COMMENTS

“Brush Collections”
“HUD-SAHA mandate Title 6 – Enacted by Congress-need revision”
“Home improvement scams”
“Church care”
“HMO’s”
“Ethnic Facilities”
“Transportation to doctors visits”
“Exercise/walks, fitness, and activities”
“Information on highways”
“Support for caregiver”
“Food Stamps”
“Disability Assistance”
“Information/Services for Grandparents raising their Grandchildren”
“Fraud and scams”
“In-home personal assistant (caregiver support)”
“Accountability and enforcement of compliance for quality care of nursing home patients”
“Mental health services for elderly & education for caregiver”
“Abuse and neglect education and information”
“ADA issues”
“Respite Services”
“High cost of homeowners insurance”
“Special rate on electricity and water”
“Therapy recreation”
“Weekend meals”
“Assistance for upkeep of lawn”
“A program similar to WIC, for the elderly”
“Low cost of prescription drugs”
“All parks and recreation center rules need improvements”
“Personal needs like clothing and shoes”
“Help on home repairs and taxes”
“Home health care”
“Home visits by doctors”
“Help filling out forms and understanding insurance EOB’s”
“More info on services for the elderly”
“Elderly Meals (more fruits and variety of juices)”
“Social Services call daily and visit”

SERVICES AND NEEDS SURVEY

The Joint City/County Commission on Elderly Affairs is interested in hearing from you! We want to know what you think the greatest needs are for older citizens in San Antonio and Bexar County. Please review the list below and let us know by placing a check mark by the Services you think should be improved or expanded. Also indicate the priority you would place on these services from 1 to 5 (1 would be the highest with 5 being the lowest).

<u>Services or Assistance</u>	<u>Priority (1 to 5)</u>
____NUTRITION	_____
____HOUSING	_____
____TRANSPORTATION	_____
____ONE STOP EASY ACCESS TO INFORMATION & SERVICES	_____
____LEGAL ASSISTANCE	_____
____TAX RELIEF	_____
____LONG TERM CARE	_____
____INDEPENDENT LIVING	_____
____MEDICARE/MEDICAID	_____
____PRESCRIPTION DRUGS	_____
____CRIME	_____
____SAFETY	_____
____OTHER (Specify: _____)	_____

ENCUESTA SOBRE SERVICIOS Y NECESIDADES

¡La Comisión Colectiva de La Ciudad de San Antonio y del Condado de Bexar en Asuntos de Personas Mayores está interesada en oír de usted! Deseamos saber lo que Usted piensa son las necesidades más grandes para ciudadanos mayores en San Antonio y el condado de Bexar. Repase por favor la lista abajo y informenos sobre los servicios que usted piensa deben ser mejorados o ser ampliados. Indique marcando con una “X”. También indique la prioridad que usted pondría en estos servicios del uno al cinco(1 sería el más alto y 5 el más bajo).

<u>Servicios o Asistencia</u>	<u>Prioridad (1 a 5)</u>
____NUTRICIÓN	_____
____ALBERGER (VIVIENDAS)	_____
____TRANSPORTE	_____
____ACCESO FÁCIL PARA INFORMACIÓN Y SERVICIOS	_____
____AYUDA LEGAL	_____
____ASISTENCIA DE IMPUESTOS SOBRE LOS INGRESOS	_____
____CUIDADO A LARGO PLAZO	_____
____VIDA INDEPENDIENTE	_____
____MEDICARE/MEDICAID	_____
____PRESCRIPCIÓN de las DROGAS	_____
____CRIMEN	_____
____SEGURIDAD	_____
____OTRO (Especifique: _____)	_____